

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA0003738127



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



h 6.52

ELIZABETHAN JACOBSON
WABKZON, 11.10.10





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



Fools are ever forward.

The
Lord Mayor's Fool:

OR,

Maxims of Kit Nargosse.

COLLECTED AND DIGESTED BY

Gabriel Grindlage, Citizen & Scribener.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

London:

Now first published from the original MS. by

Robert Tyas, Bibliopolist,

IN PATERNOSTER ROW, NEAR UNTO THE CATHEDRAL
CHURCH OF ST. PAUL.

mdcccl.



Where followeth

THE COMICAL HISTORIE OF KIT LARGOSSE : *shewing how Dame Fortune smiled upon him ; raising him from beggary and starvation unto plenty and fatnesse ; wondrously verifying the old trite adage :*

Give a Man luck and throw him into the Sea :

Containing divers witty sayings and quaint maxims ; demonstrating that neither exalted birth nor the learning of the schools be necessary to the possession of common sense and quicknesse of parts.

PR
4705
F682



Of his Birth and Parentage.



COURTEOUS READER

Although that right witty and mirthful soul, Christopher, or by common Kit Largosse (with whom I shall hereinafter make thee better acquainted), had no pedigree bedizened and emblazoned on sheep-skin, or branching tree of genealogie depicting the

737081

divers fruits produced by and growing out of matrimoniall engraftings, yet it grieved him not that he could not in this wise shewe his qualitie : for many and many did he know, which owning these same trees genealogicall (of which they did vaunt so lustily), who had neither stick nor stock, and, may be, knew not their grandfathers, or, knowing, were well pleased to forget them, considerately becoming their own godfathers and giving them new names.

It was no reproach that he was born and bred in poverty. Of his ancestors he was entirely ignorant ; and there were only two things whereunto he could vouch with certainty. Imprimis, that he was born ; and, secondly, that he had a mother ; but who his father was, he had not vanity to set himself up as wise enow to name ; the more especially, as his mother had frequently averred she likewise had her doubts on that particular point.

Of his Person and Pursuits.

HE had a marvellously good-humoured countenance, and his mouth—rather wider than the common—was ever curling with smiling pleasantry and conceit ; promising fairly what his tongue was in no means backward in performing. Living on charity—begging being his vocation—it is not to be supposed that he gained a great deal. In sooth, he was too idle in his nature to use much importunity ; and, so that he could live without labour and crack his jokes, he seemed content, how hardly soever he might fare for his laziness.

His Coil with an Officer of the City.

LARGOSSE was once amusing himself with the small game of chuck-farthing, in a court in the ward of Cripplegate, and exulting, like a crow-

ing cock, over his gains, when lo! and behold, there arrived an officer of the same ward, one Nicholas Ewins, a round, burly, little man; an officious, piddling fellow, that liked mightily to shew his authority, wheresoever he thought he could tyrannise; and, casting a stern, black look at the whole crew, he growled out his displeasure, and laid his staff athwart Kit's shoulders, that liked it not, by reason they were nearly bare—his wardrobe being miserably scant.

“That 's no play,” quoth Largosse, rubbing his shoulders.

“Play?—a pize on thee, thou sawcie varlet,” responded the officer. “Thinkest thou I come hither to play with thee? Hence, thou tatterdemallion, and hold thy peace.”

“Strike a cur, he will yell; nay, but an empty tun, and it will complain in a hollow voice; and shall not I, that have feeling, grumble a little forsooth? Who, that looketh on that well-fed, goodly paunch of thine, would not hold thee for a man o' bowells?”

Thereupon the bystanders, that were many, did laugh lustily at this bold address, making the choler of the officer to rise, so that he was nigh choking, and he began hotly to breathe out abuses against Kit Largosse: "Thou ragged ruffian; thou cur; thou gabberlunzie; thou crawling beggar; wilt thou dare change words with me?"

"Nay, not I, for they be not good enow for a beggar's mouth!"

"Villain! Dost thou know me?"

"Know thee?—Who knows not Master Nicholas Ewins, the Deputy, the great Deputy; the gormandising Deputy; the capacious Deputy, that last Lammass ate a whole dish of stewed eels at one sitting, the belly of a peacock and the back of a coney, and divers other dainties to fill up the crooks and crannies of his internals!" This was followed by such an astounding burst of merriment as well nigh overthrew the Deputy, who did of a verity tremble and quake with consuming rage; and, moreover, seeing that the people did take heart and part with the witty beggar.

“ Good Lord ! ” quoth Master Nicholas Ewins, “ will no man of his grace’s liege subjects lend me a hand to seize this sawcie vagrant ? Shall I stand insulted and reviled ; I, Nicholas Ewins, a member of the corporation ? ”

“ In God’s name ! worthy Master Deputy Nicholas Ewins, mock not our senses, by calling thyself a member of the corporation ; for truly, in our eyes, thou seemest like unto the corporation itself, while all others are but as the members thereof.” Again and again, and louder the laugh ran against Master Nicholas Ewins, who did become as red as a cardinal’s hat with rage ; and the little man would certainly have splitten with unrevenged spite, had not a constable, an understrapper of his, come up in the very nick of time, and, by command of his incensed master, taken charge of the grinning delinquent, bearing him away to the Mayor’s to make his complaint.

“ Heyday ! ” quoth the Mayor, when they had come before him ; “ what hath troubled our good Master Deputy Ewins ? ”

Whereupon, Master Ewins hastily replied, with much chafe, “I—you—the corporation, nay, the whole City itself, hath, in my person, been insulted by this bold-faced vagrant.”

The Mayor, casting a scrutinising glance at Kit Largosse, said, “So, so ; we must not allow any offences, be they against ourselves or our officers, to pass unpunished. I pray thee, therefore, relate succinctly and distinctly, Master Deputy, wherein this young man hath done thee wrong.”

“Why, your worship, he hath abused, reviled, and mocked me in the public streets ; causing me, by his lewd jests, to be derided and laughed at by the mob :—such usage is not to be borne.”

Notwithstanding the warmth and vehemence of the Deputy’s charge, the Mayor was too well acquaint with his petty, peppery, querulous disposition to be much moved thereat.

Albeit he was a stern, hard-favoured mortal, his heart was full of kindness and charity—as all that did know him can veritably testify ;—so he turned to the culprit, who stood calmly and

steadily eyeing the Deputy, and addressed him, saying, "Dost thou hear the charge which this gentleman, and eke an officer of this city, hath preferred against thee? Say, wherefore shall I not inflict a punishment due to such an offence?"

"The offence, so please you, worthy sir, was his; seeing that he struck me without love or ceremony—with such a will as he would kick a bandy-legged turnspit, had he not the gout in his toe; whereas mine was a defence, which, so help me, could neither bruise his honour, nor his honour's carkase, by reason I gave but only words for blows. I would rather lose mine hand than lay a finger on an officer of this good city, or I do hold its badge and livery in uttermost respect, more so than those that do oft-times bear it."

Now, the Mayor was not a whit displeased at the boldness of this defence, but, contrawise, felt delight at Kit's openness; but he interrupted him by saying, "Thou speakest boldly."

To which Kit replied, with humility, "If so be truth be boldness, honoured sir, I am guilty; yet, I trust, it will do me no harm in thy just opinion."

The Mayor kindly answered, "In nowise shall it. Say on, and freely, in thy defence."

And Kit continued: "That I have abused this officer is not true. He hath the rather abused me, and his office, too, in raising his hand against me. He forgot himself; is it wondrous, then, that a cur, a gabberlunzie, a crawling beggar (as he did chuse to call me), should forget him and his dignity too? He struck me—I murmured, and he was offended and afeard; like unto an untoward child, which, having slily stricken a drum, is afrighted at the sound thereof."

There was no one in the court, save and except the angry Deputy, that did not smile at Kit's defence; the while Master Nicholas Ewins did knit his brows, and bite his lips with pure vexation, to hear himself so handled by a beggar.

The Mayor, howsoever (the more for the honour of the City, than the greatness of the offence), did order that Kit Largosse should be confined for a whole fortnight; whereat Master Deputy Nicholas Ewins exhibited no little joy.

Albeit, in the end, this proved a great piece of good fortune to Kit; for the Mayor was so vastly pleased with his witty manner, that he took proper care his confinement should not bear hard upon him; and, when the time of his durance was run out, the Mayor sent for him to his house, and said to him, "Largosse, the term of thine imprisonment is at an end. I have called thee before me, in order to give thee thy discharge, and offer thee service. Hast thou the will, as thou hast the strength to work?"

"No, so please your worship, labour liketh me not; a bone is sweeter at a gift than a joint o' meat for work!"

"Idleness, thou knowest, is the father of Mischief, if not of Vice; while Industry bringeth unto man both riches and respect."

“For riches, I care not, your worship, for, truly, I find abundance in my poverty; while I mark others most poor in their abundance. I have liberty, too, as much as any bird of the air, and the green trees and sunny fields are more joyous to me than a cage—albeit the wires thereof be gold, with fair hands to feed me with sweetmeats and confections withall. Yet would I freely labour to win thy good opinion for thy very kindness; I can only give thee mine heartily, and grieve it were nothing worth. A beggar’s blessing (saving your presence) is not worth a dog’s acceptance.”

The Mayor smiled, saying, “Well, follow the bent of thine humour, thy prison-doors are open, so go forth, and here is a mark for thy fortune.”

Largosse took the money in silence, and was evidently moved at the Mayor’s bounty. He turned the piece over and over, and, after a moment’s reflection, said unto the Mayor, “My palm is as great a stranger to the touch of such good coin, as my ears or my heart be to such

good words and good deeds as your worship hath tendered me. What wouldest thou have me do; say, that I may not wend away unthankfully with the weighty favours thou hast bestowed on me—like a sneaking cur from a kitchen, that hath feasted at the cook's cost?"

This sudden change, which arose assuredly out of pure gratitude, gave passing pleasure unto the Mayor, who kindly answered, "Why, truly, Largosse, I would offer thee food and raiment, and at a cheaper rate, too, than thy vocation can win them. Hark ye me! My Lord of Misrule is lately deceased; and, finding in thee both wit and whim withall, I intended to offer thee his cap and lath, and install thee in all his prerogatives."

Hereupon Largosse, with great glee, rubbed his hands together, and capered like one beside himself, exclaiming, "Marry, your worship, but, that cap fits to a wrinkle! The cap of liberty! Beseech your worship, install me presently; not a king's pate in Christendom ever itched more for a crown than mine for such a cap!"



Largosse installed in Office.

“Then thou art willing?” said the Mayor, laughing at the extravagance of his joy.

“Willing, quotha!” cried Largosse, I were not wise, were I otherwise, or in anywise to eschew this offer. With my cap and bells I shall be as merry among my fellows as Bow Steeple ’mong the houses of Cockayne on a holiday. Fortune hath knocked me to and fro, like a shuttlecock, for many a day; and now, lo! and behold, with the hardest knock she ever gave me (and whereat, like a blind mortal, I complained), she hath pitched me willy-nilly up to the neck in luck!”

And a vast deal more did he utter in this strain, to the delight of the Mayor, who forthwith took him into his service, and ordered him befitting apparel for his new office.

A few hours worked such a transformation in his personal appearance, that, when he presented himself to the Mayor, his patron scarcely recognised the tattered beggar in the truly good-humoured and handsome face and figure of his

newly-elected Lord of Misrule. Nor was the rest of the household less gratified with the new inmate; his wit, fancy, and good-fellowship soon won him the hearts of all.

“By my fay! Kit,” said the Mayor, “thou bearest thine honours as well as if thou haddest been bred and born a fool.”

“Your worship is not far off the mark in that remark,” replied Largosse, “for I do remember my mother’s saying that, in the self-same apartment (the which they vulgarly called a shed) wherein I first saw the light, and eke, at the same hour, a young ass and a calf were likewise born unto their respective mothers, which the old crones and gossips twisted into a marvellous omen. But now the secret’s out; Nature thereby certainly intended me for a fool—and a fool I am in all points. Albeit I feel, at present, like a young colt in new harness, I doubt not, time (who reapeth the sconces of old men, to supply the smooth chins of young ones) will presently fit the trunk-hose to the calf.”

The Mayor, on his part, appeared not at all displeased with his share in the random bargain they had made, and, scrutinising him whiles he spake, said, "In verity, Largosse, methinks there be not one of the mendicant crew that would know thee."

"They must be wiser than I give them credit for, an they do," replied Largosse; "nay, mine own mother (whose soul heaven assoil!), I verily believe, could not swear to her own brat; and, when the cat forgets the kitten she hath licked (how oft hath my mother licked me!), who shall know it? But, albeit the serpent hath cast its slough, and the old sword (so to say) is sheathed in a new scabbard, I trust your worship will always find the blade of the same temper."

The truth whereof was most admirably verified in the future good conduct and humility of Largosse, who was, in truth, too much of a philosopher at heart and in disposition ever to forget his former condition; or to crow, vauntingly, over the dainty morsel which good fortune,

rather than his own seeking, had thrown in his path. He, who had been so content to fare on a little, felt not his appetite increase with feeding; but, on the contrary, out of his present abundance he reaped the greatest pleasure in supplying the wants and necessities of the needy.

Good-humour and content were in him shining virtues; and—unlike those beggars, of whom it is proverbially said, when set on horseback, will ride to the devil—his prudence and good sense, taking the reins in hand, did bid fair and promisingly to conduct him, by a pleasant journey, to the holy land. His heart, wherein dwelt no guile, was like an open book, wherein his thoughts were written in a language and character legible to all.

His Meeting with his old Acquaintance, the Deputy.

MALICE was never harboured in his breast—nay, not even against those who had most injured him;

and he would oftentimes avow, that the sweetest revenge on an enemy was to do him a service in his need. For thereby two things were proved : that, not only wert thou superior to him in might, but superior to the despicable exercise of that spite which ever delighteth to put its cloven foot on the neck of a fallen enemy.

In proof of this feeling, when he encountered Master Nicholas Ewins at the Mayor's table, a few days after he had attained to his preferment, he went straightway up to the Deputy (who, behold, knoweth him not, by reason of his marvellous metamorphosis), and, filling a maple cup with Canary wine, pledged him, making him a handsome compliment ; whereat the little officious Deputy was mightily pleased, and rose to thank him in set terms, to the great entertainment of the Mayor ; and concluding his speech by modestly asserting how flattered he was, being a stranger (as he thought) to the Lord of Misrule, by such a mark of politeness, Kit turned short upon him, saying, " By my cap and bells, Mr. Deputy, but thou

doest me a grievous wrong in disclaiming our acquaintanceship : we have changed compliments before."

"How so?" said Nicholas.

"Why, 't is not many weeks bygone, Mr. Deputy, since thou didst pay me a compliment—on the breadth of my back—and eke with thy staff too! Dost thou not remember the gabber-lunzie Largosse? ha! Nay, by my sword of lath 'tis true. No wonder thine eyes grow round with amaze; but his worship, my worthy master, will testify that I—this butterfly, have sprung from me—that grub!"

The ruddy and rotund visage of Master Ewins grew redder and redder every moment, and when he really recognised his old acquaintance, his confusion cannot be described.

The merriment of the Mayor, and his guests, too, added to the dilemma wherein he found himself so unexpectedly. Largosse, who saw how awkwardly the discovery sat upon him, generously extricated him, saying, "I hope, Mr. Deputy,

thou wilt think no more of this; for my part, I look back with pleasure thereon, seeing that thereout arose my dignity. For which I owe thee many thanks: nay, that drubbing was unto me like the dubbing to a knight, for I have risen from it to a higher state." And here-upon offering his hand to the Deputy, he took it most cordially, and they drank together, and were speedily reconciled.

Observing upon his unexpected good-luck, he likened himself unto the boy's ball, the which crossing the path of a fractious man, he attempted to kick it away despitefully, when lo! it fell into a pan of treacle which was standing by; to the boy's delight (who licked off the treacle) and the man's cost (who paid for it).

The King his Visit.

HIS grace the King having intimated his royal intention to honour the Mayor of the City with

a visit, there was a great preparation made for his entertainment at the Guildhall.

Cooks, haberdashers, naperers, and divers others of the like crafts, who employ their skill in the service of luxury, were all in requisition.

All was speedily prepared and ready, even unto the table speeches of the prominent men of the Guild, who expected to be honoured by his grace's notice.

The ladies of the aldermen and the common council almost exhausted the patience of their milleners and the bourses of their obliging and obsequious spouses, that they might appear with becoming splendour on the occasion; the matrons striving to appear as maidenly, and the teen maidens as matronly, as art could render them.

The long-expected hour at last arrived; and the civic procession began. Lords and ladies, as stiff as new dresses and broderie could render them, and all in buckle, came as thick and as gay as butterflies on a summer's day.

Howsomever, as it were as difficult—nay, almost impossible—to describe, particularly, the different occurrences at a crowded feast, as the various feats of offence and defence in a battle or siege; I shall, as more befitting this biographicall historie, confine myself, like an epic poet, more especially to the conduct of my hero, humble as he be.

Largosse then, be it known, was in nowise cast in the shade by his betters; for the Mayor, with whom he had more than ever ingratiated himself, spared no expense in furnishing him forth in that gear which befitted his calling, so that he was the very Fool of fools; and not even the King his Jester himself, with all his courtly apparel, could of a possibility mock at this humble member of his whimsical fraternity, in respect of his outward bearing.

The encounter of these disciples of Momus was ridiculously solemn. “By mine ears!” quoth the King his Jester, formally embracing Kit, “I am right glad to enfold the witty Cit and City

wit. Long mayest thou crow the cock of Cockayne! May thy wit never halt, and thy every bolt hit the bull's-eye!"

To which Kit answered, saying gravely, "Gramerey! and welcome, brother of the lath and bells! And may thy wit ever sparkle as bright as a green log, even until thou burnest down to the gray embers of old age, and mayest thou die as full of *time* and *sage* as a roasted gosling."

Having thus greeted each other, in a sort, after the manner of their lords, they forthwith took their appointed stations near unto the King, causing much merriment in their immediate circle by their whimsical sallies.

One Ambrose Lutton, a wealthy citizen, in the loyalty of his heart, magnified and brought to maturity by the royal visitor's gracious presence, after many had voluntarily offered considerable sums for the King's exigencies in the carrying on of the projected war with France, did munificently pray his grace to accept of a regiment which he promised to equip, at all points, at his own in-

dividual cost and charges, the which the King (as may be supposed), not only gladly vouchsafed to honour by his acceptance, but likewise conferred on the merchant the honour of knight-hood. A fair exchange of enviable rank and title (the which he could well support) for a portion of worldly gain (the which he could the no less well afford).

So hath wealth oftimes, in a manner, the same virtue as valour, in gaining the possessor thereof advancement, as hath been instanced in many men of this our city, who have verily progressed as rapidly in the career of ambition with the *caduceus* (the emblem of commerce), as others with the mace and faulchion !

The King his Jester, marking well the fruits which sprang out of this loyal act, presently cutteth out the core of a pippin, and, presenting it to his grace, said, " May it please your grace to accept from an humble subject, not a regiment (for I could easier raise a laugh than a regiment), but a whole *core* ! "

Whereat the King laughed, and (of course) all who heard and saw him joined in the merriment.

Largosse, not to be backward in loyalty or gibe at such a moment, cracked a nut, and picking out the kernel thereof, said modestly unto the King, "As my brother's *core* may lack a leader, will it please your grace to accept a *kernel*!" At which conceit, the mirth was redoubled, the King paying many compliments to the Mayor on the ready wit of his Fool.

An alderman begging Kit to put up a pye or somewhat that needed not the skill of carving, Largosse straightway brought him a calf's head.

"Thou fool," quo' the alderman, "did I not bid thee bring to hand a dish that required no carving?"

"Ay, marry," responded Kit, "and have I not brought thee a calf's head, which, being here, must perforce be *calved* already; for, had not the cow calved it, so would not the calf have appeared at this royal feast?" And on another occasion observed, "That Norfoike was famous for turkeys;

yet was Norfolke the only place where turkeys were not turkeys, for there they were—*bred!*”

Largosse his Counsell to the Mayor his Son.

THE eldest son of the Mayor being about to set forth on foreign travel, with a learned man, his tutor, the Mayor took upon him before his departure, to administer some sage advice for his conduct.

Largosse, being present, followed the son upon his leaving the closett, and, plucking him by the sleeve of his doublett, did seriously bespeak his attention to what he would proffer in the way of counsell.

“Well Kit,” quo’ the son, smiling, “say thy say; and, as time is precious, let it be brief.”

“Nay,” answered Largosse, “I will be as short as a cobbler’s awl, and eke as pointed, Master Gregory; and albeit thy worthy sire hath given thee morality enow to make a monk, I

would cast my mite into the heap. A thread and needle, Master Gregory, may serve a traveller's turn, at times, as well as a hatchett."

"By'r lady, if thou goest on at this rate, Largosse, thy thread will be waxed even unto a skaine—prythee, unravell it quickly."

"There it is now," cried Kit. "This very suddenness is a defect that thrusteth blind youth into the very jaws of difficulty. Listen patiently unto the voice of experience. Never be too ready to draw thy rapier, lest thou cut a friend—e'en against a foe it is folly—for thou mayest chance to make two of one."

"But a gentleman must not put up with affronts!" said Master Gregory.

"Not so: if a man offend thee grievously, bear it with Christian fortitude and forbearance—that is, if thine enemy be the stronger of the twain; but, can'st thou crow over him with impunity, marry, sirs, scruple not to kick him soundly!—to the *breech*, boldly, like a soldier in a siege. In the second place, drink not deeply;

for, albeit it may be at another's expense, it is at thy cost, the receipts whereof be a red nozzle, pale visage, and a gouty toe ! Moreover, fall not in love by lamplight, or moonlight, for they be both marvellous liars in the service of beauty. Your bright glow-worms do ofttimes prove meer grubs by daylight ! Play neither at shuffle-board, nor pitch and toss ; for if thou beest the better player, they be fools that play thee ; if the worser, they be knaves and fools ; and knaves be not fitting company for a gentleman. Observe these four rules respecting play, wine, women, and quarrells, and thou shalt return with a whole doublett, and in good health ; but shouldest thou, maugre my good advice, run counter thereto, thou wilt, of a surety, return out at elbows, and be as unsound as a stale onion, making all eyes that look upon thee weep !”

His Saying of Friendships.

WHEN one man offereth another his hand, let him take it; there is no harm in taking a man's hand; he would be a sowre churl to thrust it aside. But if this be done over the bowl or at board, and in the giving thereof a thousand fat and fair promises accompany it, beware thou place no reliance therein. For when a man offereth thee that which is of no value to thee in prosperity, he is likely to do the same when thou art in need!

I knew a wealthy youth, who prided himself in the possession of one true and honest friend; he had tried him; he knew that he would die to serve him. He had never demanded the slightest favour of him during the whole course of their acquaintance. And was not such a man worthy to share his confidence, his board, his purse? He became his pride, his boast, and the people likened them to Damon and Pythias; and they 'ycleped

this honest, worthy, disinterested friend, his inseparable, his reflexion, his shadow ; and in this latter they judged truly. But shadows are only seen in the sunshine, and lo ! when the youth's fortunes were obscured, and the sun of his prosperity was clouded, his shadow vanished !

If friends did beget vanity, I should be blown up like a bladder ; seeing I have such abundance within the walls of Cockayne. Not long ago I was wont to walk the streets without beck or call ; because, forsooth, no one chose to know such a lean, poverty-stricken devil. I was as ragged as a stray colt ; and no honest soul could recognise me, having the misfortune, like Dobbie's white mare, to have no *marks* about me. But Fortune hath now kindly bestowed on me such particular marks of her favour, that my good friends can never pass me ; one slaps me on the shoulder, and vows he knew me by my gait ; another claims acquaintance with the fitness and gentility of my garb ; and yet another swears by his beard that he could not by a possibility mistake my good-

looking face! and others, whom I have heretofore known to be as short and as sharp as a bodkin in their converse—meting out their cool words by the syllable—now stop me in the public way, and, lolling on their walking-staves, grow mightily loquacious, stuffing mine ears with dainty and familiar words—and this is the world!

From Good sometimes cometh Evil.

WALKING one sunshiny day in Finsburie Fields, with Sir John Pawlett, the facetious knight did remark to Kit, “It was strange the gaiety and warmth of the sun, which tempted the rich and the well-apparelled and the beautiful to display their charms and their span new habiliments, should likewise draw forth the low, mean, and dirty rabble; the which was like unto an evil arising from a good cause.”

“True,” responded Kit, “and I have ofttimes remarked it, that the same glorious sun which

causeth the fairest flowers to bloom, doth ever procreate millions of vermin—like unto the smiles of great men, which giveth joy to one, and breedeth envy in another ; and so is all earthy good wisely alloyed ; or, being otherwise, this earth would be so heavenly, that men would be-think them of no other heaven !”

The People.

THE people of a kingdome, he would say, is composed of three kinds: the high, the low, and the middling. Now the two extreames, high and low, albeit they have fewer cares (the high being rich and above want, and the low having nothing to lose), yet are they the most liable to the changes of fortune. While, in truth, the middling do appear to me like the nave of a great wheel (Fortune's, if thou wilt so define it), the high and low being placed in juxta-position at the extremities thereof ; now, therefore, howsoever

this be revolved, whether the high fall, or the low rise, the nave still keepeth its position, although it be moved.

Of his Joke with the Churchman.

It chanced, upon a day, that a certain churchman said unto Kit Largosse that he was about to put up prayers to heaven for rain; seeing how lamentably the pastures were scorched and dried up by the summer heats.

“Friend,” said the fool, “thou haddest better petition his grace.”

“In sooth, but that would be a dolt’s errand,” responded the churchman.

“Nay, not so, neither,” continued Kit; “I will prove it both wise and loyal.”

“In truth!—how so?”

“Why, if so be thou wantest rain, reverend sir, can’st thou do better, pray, than pray the *reigning* King to give it thee?”

The Hare.

A CITIZEN having received a present of a hare from a friend in the New Forrest, seemed not mightily pleased with it, but in lieu thereof, complained that the charges given for its conveyance was more than the worth of the same ; and Kit, who was by, did humourously observe, That all gifts and tokens were esteemed precious, and, by reasons thereof, were dear. “ A poor man, now,” said he, “ is seldom or never troubled with gifts ; your generous donors seeing, forsooth, no chance of a return ; for there are those that bestow presents as men sow seeds, in the hope and benefit of a good harvest.”

His Jest on the Gabbler.

THE Mayor, from motives of policy, and not from any love he entertained for his society, did

invite Sir Gervase Tucker to dine with him. This same knight, who inherited a large fortune from his father, was a man of considerable weight in the City—not in the council—albeit he was a member thereof, representing his own ward. His vapid garrulity was a proverb among the citizens; and, unfortunately, he had a notion that he was a man of wit. His whole stock of this rare and precious commodity, however, consisted in the relation of one story. But his ingenuity was of a truth extraordinary; for, whatsoever might be the texture of the conversation, he generally contrived to interweave his threadbare narrative therein.

“A compleat ass!” said the Mayor, with a sigh.

“Nay, a most imperfect one,” responded Kit; “for, albeit he can boast a long *tale*, he is continually in search of a pair of ears, the which finding, he can never retain.”

“An he begin his story, and fix upon me,” said the Mayor, “I shall certes die under the infliction of his grimace and gesticulation.”

“Proud death!” exclaimed Largosse; “for thou wilt then truly die the death of Adonis, being killed by a—*bore!*”

A Paradox.

ONE Simon Moulsey was bewailing his losses at play. “Five hundred marks,” said he, “were in this bourse last Martinmass, and not a coin is there left, by the beard of St. Peter! Yet, twice have I doubled my capital in that time, and lost all again.”

“Then art thou a marvellously clever fellow, Master Moulsey,” said Kit, “for thou hast lost and won, and yet hast made a loss *a-gain!*”

The Cause of his Fatnesse.

A FRIEND of Kit's, meeting him after a long absence, did accost him thus, saying, “By my

troth ! but thou hast grown quite out of knowledge, friend Largosse."

" True ; for have I not become a fool ! albeit I am not the first man whose wit hath made a fool of him."

" Nay, I mean thou hast increased in capacity and bulk."

" Ay ; is there not a vast difference ? Who that knew the lean beggar, the walking-staff, poor skin-and-bone, whose nose and chin were as sharp as his wit or his appetite, could claim acquaintance with me now—the little beggar grown into a great fool ?"

" Doubtless, thou hast little else to do than eat, drink, jibe, and laugh !"

" Have I not ? I labour hard in my vocation. I preach, moralise, and shew, in my practice and my person, the fruits of living well. And whenever folks talk of my rotundity and fatness, I remember how little I once was, and bless the Mayor, my master, who hath, by his bounty, made so much of me !"

His Saying of Matrimony.

IT is said that a goode wife is a crown to her husband. For mine own part, I desire not such a coronation; a crowned head is ever full of cares. Albeit, were I so inclined, where, I ask, should I find such an one? Good wives, in truth, may be crowns, but I verily believe they be as rare. We cannot all be kings; though God wot there be *queans* enow in the world.

The Cooke's Son.

ONE Pierre Didot, a Frenchman, was cooke to the Mayor, and, marrying the scullion—who, albeit mean in office, was a comely wench to view—in the due course of time this wife did bring him a son. The joy of Didot cost him the matter of a mark or twain; and there was, as may be supposed, no lack of sops in the pan

and tid-bits for the gossips who came to compliment the cooke; coming thither with empty praises, and returning with full bellies. One of these same, dandling this seion of a cooke in her arms, held him out to Kit, saying, "Is it not a chick worth a whole brood? Mark how it crows! Is it not marvellously like unto the father?"

"Ay, truly, the brat is like," replied Kit; "and being so, so may the cooke's son be said to be the *spit* of his father."

The Vaulter.

IT came to pass on a certain holiday, in the month of January, that there assembled a motley multitude of 'prentices, mechanics, and craftsmen, in the broad fields adjoining unto Clerkenwell, where there were enacted many athletick disports and passtimes of quoiting, pitching the bar, wrestling, foot-races, and the like; and

among other feats done that day, there was one that did surpass all the others in the wonderfull agility thereof, the which was this: one Nicholas Greene, a weaver, did offer in defiance, a broad piece of silver that he would vault over a bar two feet higher than any there; whereupon the ambition of many skilled therein were put upon their mettle, and, in the attempting, were laid upon their backs; not only losing their breath and their gage, but winning broken noses and spraines, and the mocks of them that did look on. The while Nicholas Greene proved, right well, that he could back his big words by great deeds, by vaulting over the bar, to the wonder and admiration of all; skimming through the air like a marten, and rising like a hound in the chace; and, bursing the pieces of the competitors, walked off rather heavier than he came.

Largosse, being present, was asked of one what he thought of Greene.

“Truly,” quo’ he, “either this fellow’s sire were a leper, or he were born in a leap-year;

and, moreover, may I rightly assert, I have this day beheld what man never saw afore, for I have seen—a Greene spring in winter!”

Kit and the Poulterer.

GOING one day into a poulterer's shop, in East Chepe, to purchase some pickled pigs' ears, whereof he was exceedingly fond; he put them into his pocket, telling the man he would send him the price anon.

“Nay,” said the man hastily, “I neither ask trust nor give it. Leave the ears, and when thou sendest the money I will deliver them.”

Largosse stared at the poulterer with some wonder, but, observing a friend pass, beckoned him. “Lend me a tester,” said he, “or I shall lose mine ears!”

His friend smiled, and gave him his demand; at the same time remarking, “I am sorry thy credit is so low, Kit!”

“Why, the man’s caution strangles credit in the cradle. This trusty chapman trusts no one: not even a trussed fowl upon trust.”

The poulterer now coming to know the Mayor’s Lord of Misrule, was very obsequious, and, bobbing his head like one of his own turkey-cocks, offered him many apologies, and even begged him to accept the ears.

“But, by the mass! Master Largosse, I did not know thee.”

“Not know me,” cried Largosse, “a pretty joke! Why, sirrah, have I not dealt with thee for *ears*?”

he Indecent Wit.

AT a dinner, given by the Mayor to several members of the common council, there was one who had accumulated great wealth, and was, moreover, remarkable for the voracity of his appetite and the pruriency of his speech.

He was a short, obese man, with a red visage and an apoplectic neck; and no sooner had he whetted the edge of his wit with a bottle or twain of the good wine, than his taciturnity was thawed, and he poured forth a flood of ribaldry that not only made the goodly company to laugh, but to blush.

The Mayor was ever too hospitable and too well-bred to check the humour of an invited guest, albeit he felt much annoyance at the indecent wantonness of his mirth.

Largosse, notwithstanding the broad licence derived from his vocation and the lowness of his birth, entertained too much respect for his hearers to offend against good manners by any sally that smacked of vulgarity.

This guest having departed, it was remarked of him, that he was "a right merrie rogue," wicked in sooth, but "of a rare wit!"

"That such wit should be rare," replied Largosse, "is a compliment to good sense; for, by my troth, such wit liketh me not; unseemly as

it is, it seemeth unto me like the foul glare of the link-boy's torch, which serveth but to shew the varlet's filthy rags and the mire in which he tramps and spatters around him as he runneth !”

The Secret of his Agreeableness.

A FRIEND of Kit's, remarking how universally he made himself welcome and agreeable unto all with whom he came in contact, inquired of him the reason thereof.

“In most persons and things,” responded he, “I have observed there be ever two qualities—the good and the bad : now, in lauding the good, ye may probably increase its worth ; while, by neglecting to notice the bad, ye may lessen, or, at all events, not make it the worse. An if a man ask me to his board, and set before me good meats and indifferent ale, I straightway praise the dishes and sip of my horn in silence—well knowing that an I were to blow on such an horn, I should only

get an ill report for my pains. An if a mother bring unto me her children, and they be rude and unmannered, but clever at their books, I pat their little heads and say, 'How happy must a mother be in having children so remarkable for their *forwardness*!' When Master Tyrrell readeth me his rhymes, which, God wot! halt like a cripple, I bear the infliction with a smile (his manner, not his matter, causeth this), for, in truth, 't is sorry balderdash; and yet, withall, written in such a fair and clerk-like hand, that I never fail to exclaim, 'What beautiful *writing*!' And, in sooth, this is the cunning of the bee, which draweth honey even from the stinging-nettle!"

Of the pleasant Trick he put upon the Host of the "Magpyes."

ONE fair morn in summer, Largosse set forth with some of his merry boon companions, with the intent of passing the day in the greene woods

which were without the Ald-Gate of the Citie ; a resort then much frequented by the good citizens on certain holydays for the like purpose.

That they might not lack good chere, they purveyed sundry meats, intending to have them cooked at a small ale-house, the which stood in the vicinity of the place they were bound unto.

Among these several things, Largosse had brought a leg of pork in a sack ; for they having asked of him "What he intended to stand?" Kit replied that he had turned their question over and over again in his mind, and that he had ultimately resolved, "That a leg was the very best thing in the world to stand!"

Nowe about a stone's throw from the Gate stood a sort of inferior hostel, whereat there was much more accommodation for horses than men ; and into this same place they must needs go to quaff a cup of nut-brown ale to slake the drought of the party.

Brown jugs, with heads like cauliflowers, and clean horns were presently ranged on the oaken

table in the long room, the which served the purpose of kitchen and drinking-room to the "Magpyes," for such was the sign of the hostel alluded to.

While they were a-drinking, in comes a greasy cook-maid, with a fine leg of mutton on a wooden trencher, and plumps it right into the iron crock boiling over the great fire.

Largosse, without so much as saying a word to his comrades, no sooner saw the maid leave the room, than he put his finger to his lips, and, walking straightway up to the fire-place, whipped out the mutton in a trice, and therein placed his pork, tyeing up the mutton in his sack.

The merriment of his companions, at this feat, it is impossible to describe; and, in sooth, so tickled were they therewith, that he was compelled, in a measure, to draw them away lest the host should discover the ludicrous exchange.

On they went upon their way, commenting on this merry conceit of Largosse, and marvelling at the probable consequences thereof.

We will pass over the pastimes and pleasures they enjoyed in the woods ; for, in the conversation of Kit, it were impossible that the hours should be remarkable for aught but the swiftness of their flight.

“ Nowe, master, an if thou hast anything in thy awmbry to feast us withal, bring it forth quickly, for we be as sharp as a February frost,” quoth Largosse, on their return to the “ Magpyes.”

The host hereupon conferred with his good wife, and there appeared, for a moment, a serious consultation to ensue ; anon, the cook-maid held up both her hands, and then there was a world of whispering ; in the meanwhile, the tricky travellers, one and all, maintained as grave a countenance as they could assume, and seated themselves about the table.

After much ado, knives and wooden platters were spread, and lo ! the leg of pork was brought forth untouched !

Largosse winked at his companions, and they fell to in good earnest ; the host and his spouse,

and even the cook, passing to and fro, and ever and anon casting their eyes anxiously upon the hungry guests.

Having speedily consumed a large wedge of the meat, Largosse watched a fitting opportunity, and adroitly substituting the mutton, on which they had dined, for the pork, called for the reckoning.

“Let me see,” said the host, “Four quarts of ale, and pork ”——

“Pork !” exclaimed Largosse, feigning surprise, “Mutton, thou meanest !”

“Mutton !” cried the host, opening his eyes and staring at the joint—“Mutton, why—I—goodness gracious me ! Here, Dorcas ! Dorcas !”

“Well, master ?” quoth the cook.

“I thought that thou haddest brought out the pork ?” said he.

“The saints preserve us !” shrieked Dorcas, casting a frightened glance upon the contents of the trencher. “The Devil’s in the meat !” and incontinently rushed out of the place to relate this second strange metamorphosis to her astounded mistress.

“Why, what is the matter?” demanded Largosse: “Is yon wench distraught?”

“O Lord! I do n’t know,” cried the bewildered host, scratching his ear and gaping with wondering eyes upon the mutton. “For my part—well, I can’t make it out, and that’s God’s truth.”

“What, not make out the reckoning?” said Largosse, with great simplicity, awhile his companions could, with much difficulty, refrain from laughing outright in the face of the admiring hosteller. At last, he demanded twelve pence for the ale, but stoutly refused to take a single groat for the meat they had consumed, right willingly giving them a hearty welcome to the mutton, and wishing them a good digestion; and so the merry fellows departed, leaving the puzzled host still gazing suspiciously upon the remnants of the feast, unable to unravel the cause of this apparent witchery.

This was a pleasant adventure, the which caused much disport at the table of the Mayor, when the same was afterwards narrated thereat by Largosse.

The Debtor.

OF the number of wits who frequently dined at the Mayor's table, and added the spice of their hilarity to flavour the entertainment, there was none that shone more conspicuously, or who received a more earnest welcome, than Master Ralph Enscombe.

Like many others, however, who vaunt of their high lineage, his fortune was slender; and, economy not being of the number of his virtues, he consequently soon became straitened. The law, which hath no more respect for wit than a summer shower for a smart sattin, or a spider for a blue-bottle, seized upon the penniless gentleman, and (as Kit said) finding him confined in his means, soon found means to confine him,—providing him with a lodging in Lud-Gate.

By sheer accident, Largosse discovered his retreat, and thereupon speaking unto the Mayor, his worship, that much regretted the loss of his com-

pany, commissioned the kindly suitor to visit him and discharge the debt for which he was held in durance, amounting to the sum of twenty marks.

Kit lost no time in seeking his friend, and found, to his amazement, that he had grown exceedingly fat—a happy, careless disposition, and the want of exercise, conducing thereto. “They seem to keep thee well, at any rate,” remarked Kit.

“I’ faith, if by well-kept thou meanest safely, thou art right,” replied Ralph, laughing; “but albeit they took me in, they were compelled to let out my garments! Am I not grown?”

“Would all my friends were like unto thee,” said Kit; “for nothing rejoiceth my heart so much as the increase of my friends!”

After a world more of this pleasant discourse, Largosse communicated the friendly object of his visit. “But, truly, Master Enscombe,” quoth he, “the good nature of his worship (which prompted him to set thee free) hath been marvellously forestalled.”

“How so?” demands Ralph.

“Why,” answereth Largosse, “hath not bountiful Nature already enlarged thee!”

His Reply to the Chaplaine.

NOTWITHSTANDING the licence of speech which was awarded unto him in virtue of his office, Largosse ever entertained so much respect for his hearers, and eke for himself, that he was never known (albeit many of his betters too often set him but an ill example) to utter anything in the leastwise bordering on ribaldry or indecency; he had, moreover, such an overweening reverence for the clergy, that never, in his gayest of moments, when all was hilarity at the Mayor’s table, did he ever address aught to the Chaplaine, although oftentimes provoked thereunto by the facetiousness of that functionary, who was, like unto many of the cloth, a merry man, and affected both his joke and his bottle. For Kit, very properly, would have deemed it the height of unseemly imperti-

nence to bandy jests with his reverence, or run a tilt with him in light and flippant discourse. "Thof the Shepherd strike me with his crooke, I aye keep my lath in the scabbard," saith he.

This priest, William Orton by name, was much pleased with the modesty and discretion of Largosse, and sought divers opportunities of speaking with him in private ; honestly confessing that his apt answers frequently gave him food for reflection. "Lightness of speech and shallowness of brain," said the priest, "be tantamount. What sayest thou, is it not so, Largosse?"

"Truly, Sir William," answereth Largosse, "it may be so:" and then coolly taking in hand a brown jug of foaming ale which stood on the board, he continued, "I have ever observed that the strongeth ale sheweth abundance of froth, and is bright and sparkling, whilst your small ale hath scarcely none, and is flat and insipid!" And thus adroitly did he answer the priest, hitting the mark without seeming to take an aim.

Of Morality.

“MORALITY,” saith he, speaking unto the aforementioned Chaplaine, who had, by the bye, hardly pressed him into the discussion, “is the child of mortal philosophy; religion, the offspring of the immortal soul. Morality is an excellent cement; but religion is, after all, the key-stone of society. The one is, in fine, a good shadow of a better substance.”

The Candidate for Civic Honours.

ONE Gilbert Norton, a grocer by trade, and eke a man of substance, was possessed of so mendacious a tongue that his bible-oath was held in less respect than the bare word of another.

Notwithstanding which, he found friends (in whose favour he had ingratiated himself by means of a good cook and an excellent cellar; two in-

fallible allies, with reverence be it spoken, in the politicks of our fair Citie) to propose him at a ward-mote for a member of the common counsell.

The Mayor, who knew his character, would scarce believe his ears; the rumour, however, was speedily verified.

“Well, Largosse,” saith the Mayor, with the sharpness of vexation, “’t is no idle report, I find; this Norton intends to stand.”

“It rejoiceth one to hear the happy tidings,” replies Largosse coolly.

“How so, Fool?” cries the Mayor.

“Marry, your worship, ’cause the knave hath been lying all his life, and his resolution to stand sheweth he is in the way of amendment, by changing his downright imposture to an upright posture.”

The Mayor smiled, and continued, saying, “The brazen varlet, too, appeareth quite confident of success, and boasteth everywhere abroad of the promises of support that he hath received on all hands.”

“Then honesty hath some chanee,” quoth Largosse ; “for the fellow is as full of ‘lies’ as a church-yard ; and, therefore, depend on’t, his boasts are meer bubbles, that have no more foundation than the praises in a rich man’s epitaph.”

Sanctioned by the Mayor, Largosse proposed to visit the citizens, and endeavour to win over their voices in favor of Norton’s opponent in the contest ; expressing a hope that even his poor influence, though a meer feather, might turn the scale.

And, setting forth in the honourable quest of supporting Truth against Falsehood, he resolved to carry on his manœuvres even in the camp of the enemy. And presently discovering the place where the friends and supporters of the wealthy candidate assembled, he incontinently repaired thither.

Albeit unarrayed in his motley garb, he was soon recognized, and right heartily welcomed.

It is true the company was composed of the very meanest order of the citizens, but wit sup-

plied the want of eloquence in Largosse, and he addressed them, in language so familiar to their ears (for no one understood the vulgar tongue of Cockayne better), that he completely led them away.

He made no direct accusation against the candidate, but put such questions touching his probity and honour, and so-forth, that were unanswerable; and not only implied a doubt of his worthiness, but carried a conviction in the minds of his audience that he was totally unfitted for the occupation he sought.

There was one among them, a paid advocate, a jackall of Norton's, who trembled for his client; one of those worthless men of law which honest folks, with clean hands and clear consciences, do avoid as carefully as they would a scavenger, for truly their work is generally as dirty and less honourable. After a string of queries, Largosse concluded by asking, "Who was the Liar of London?"

"Randall Bates, by jingo!" shouted one of his hearers.

"Nay, Norton is," said Largosse.

"Take heed, sirrah," interrupted the man of law, "thou shalt pay for this. I call upon ye all to witness, Christopher Largosse calleth Gilbert Norton a liar."

"Softly," replied Largosse, "I deny it! I simply asked this worthy citizen, Who was the Liar of London? He names Randall Bates."

"Well!" said the Advocate.

"'Randall Bates is a liar,' quoth he. I say Norton is"—

"What, sirrah?" fiercely demanded the other.

"A *grocer*!" calmly replied Largosse, with such an expression of innocent astonishment at the warmth of the legal interlocutor, that the whole room shook with the riotous applause that followed, and the man of law fled as if affrighted.

And, certes, the Lord of Misrule worked so well and diligently in the good cause, that he greatly assisted in ousting Gilbert Norton; for in the end he lost his election, to the great delight of the Mayor and all good citizens.



The Eagle and the Monkey.

The Eagle and the Monkey.

IN the suburbs south of the Citie of London, and on the other side of that famous bridge whose well-stored shops on either side be the admiration of all strangers, there was a publick garden named the “Bower,” by reason of the variety of shrubs and flowers wherewith it was most tastefully adorned; affording unto the artisans and their families an inviting spot of harmless recreation after the fatigues and labour of the day.

The host of this retreat, among divers things purveyed and thither brought for the entertainment of his visitors, had a huge eagle affixed by the leg to an iron chain to the stump of a tree; the which was, moreover, for security from all harm to the bystanders, surrounded by a sort of artificial rock-work, done in so delectable a manner that it admirably represented the handiwork of nature.

Solemn as a judge the great bird of prey sat on his perch; ever and anon winking his eyes, and turning his head from left to right, from right to left, as the delighted folk moved to and fro, gazing with admiration upon the king of the skye. Nowe, near unto his prison was reared a lofty pole, at the summit whereof was a kind of dove-cote, the domicile of a little monkey, brought by the brother of the host, an adventurous mariner, from a country beyond the seas. This creature, so like unto humane nature in his outward form and actions, drew great crowds about him; and, you may believe, there was no spare of apples, and nuts, and gingerbread to entertain him withall; for his tameness and docility, and the merriment excited by his whimsical gambols, presently made him a vast favorite both with young and old.

He was, by the way, so fond of the host, that he no sooner drew near than he would spring incontinently upon his shoulders, pull his hair, and nuzzle to him with the affection of

an infant, to the infinite sport and diversion of all beholders. Nor was the kindly host in a degree less fond of the pleasaunt animal, tending him ever with the greatest care; being, in sooth, not only a source of pleasure but of profit unto him in the way of his calling.

On a luckless day, however, it chanced, when no one was by, that the little animal loosed himself from his bonds; and, being free to wander whithersoever he listed, or his curiosity led him, he must needs intrude a visit upon the eagle; and, seeing his neighbour at dinner, invited himself, without ceremony, to take pot-luck; which, alack! proved ill luck to him: for the poor thoughtless little animal no sooner presented himself, than the proud bird of the mighty Jove, not understanding his droll and fantastic antics, or being thereat incensed, indignantly ruffled up his feathers, and in the twinkling of an eye laid the inoffensive monkey dead at his feet, ruthlessly tearing him into a thousand pieces.

Loud were the lamentations of the host over the mangled remains of his favourite, and not one among the frequenters of his place but did grieve mightily at his disastrous death; for he had no enemies in the whole world but this awful bird.

Largosse, who much affected the "Bower," on account of its agreeableness, and the company of many of his friends who resorted thither, joined in the universal clamour against the ferocity of the eagle.

Some one was eager in proposing the destruction of the destroyer.

"Nay, not so," quoth Largosse, "'tis its nature; if the fly will heedlessly rush into the web of the spider, he meeteth his doom. And, after all," continued he gravely, "the eagle hath only treated the monkey as mine host would serve a customer."

"Good Lord!" cried out the speaker—who Kit, be it said, considered had chattered too glibly, and become rather mawkishly sentimental

upon the subject—"What meanest thou? Thou would'st not say"——

"Meerly this," interrupteth Kit, putting his forefinger on his sleeve, "that the monkey dined with the eagle, and that the eagle *sent his bill into the monkey* for a dinner!"

Loyalty.

"LOYALTY," said Largosse, "dependeth much on the stomach. Give a man his fill, and you shall find him as quiet as a well-fed dog on a doore-mat; whilst your half-starved rebel goeth about grumbling, and infecting others with his windy whimsies, like unto a hungry, lean-ribbed hound which runneth through the streets, with his nose in the mud, snapping and snarling at all he meeteth."

"Nay, I would bet my bauble that no fat man hath ever justly lost his head for treasonous plots.

“ Wherefore, would I advise his grace to keep all his subjects in good case, for fat beeves work greater wonders than stout souldiers. As peace produceth plenty, so doth plenty beget contentment — whence springeth loyalty and the best affection ; for he must needs be a very churl indeed, that will quarrell with his porridge, even though fortune provide him nothing better than a wooden spoon to eat it withall.”

Charity.

“ THERE are those which think, forsooth, that charity consisteth in alms-giving ; and flatter themselves in the vaine belief that, in giving a portion of their abundance to the poor, they purchase a cloke even for their iniquities ; whereas, according to my humble notion, charity meaneth a brotherly affection, not only unto one’s own kind, but eke unto the brutes. Some men, indeed, have such an ill-manner in the bestowall

of their bounties, that even their gold hath not the weight of a feather in the ballance ; and yet, nevertheless, do they expect to purchase gratitude with ostentation, foolishly complaining of the barrenness of the soile, when the fault lieth in the seed they scatter."

His Quip upon the Satyrst.

ONE of those rhymesters, whose passing fame hath no other foundation than personal scandal, propped up by the malice of contemporary envy, had writ some impertinent verses upon a right worthy gentleman who was much esteemed of Largosse. It was, indeed, but a sorry dish of perverted truth garnished with lies ; but, albeit the production was as ephemeral as a gnat, it was alike troublesome and annoying to the party ; for the shaft of ridicule, be it cast by never so clumsy a hand, can rarely be parried either with success or temper.

Being at the Mayor's table, where he was courted by the guests rather through fear than affection, he discoursed glibly, like a shallow witling as he was, of his popularity and the commendations he had received.

Some, who would fain have sheltered themselves from his lash under the shield of flattery, declared that they held his love verses equal to the like efforts of the Latin Ovidius; the which, gross as it was, he seemed to swallow with the voracity of a pike-fish.

Turning to Largosse, who sat silently admiring at his antics and volubility, he suddenly appealed to him, saying, "Brother Largosse (for all wits are brethren), what sayest thou? Shall I abandon satyr and stick to love? Pray thee, now, guide me by the light of thy judgement; and say, shall I henceforth dip my pen in gall or honey?"

"Nay, dip thy pen in treacle, an thou wilt," saith Largosse, "but stick to satyr, for therein thy genius lyeth."

“Thou flatterer,” crieth the rhymester.

“Nay, lyeth most notoriously, I mean,” continueth Largosse; whereat there was a burst of boisterous merriment, in which he that was the ridiculous object thereof joined loudly, meerly to conceal his mortification, for his tongue was thereafter compleatly silenced, and he presently slunk away, quite crest-fallen, from the goodly company.

Honesty.

SOME vaunt loudly of their honesty, that, never being tempted by necessity, lack the true test; for, it seemeth to me, that he who wanteth for nothing must needs be a weak knave indeed that should want this virtue.

Others, agen, are honest from pure fear, that be great rogues by inclination, but possess not the courage to do their will.

In my days of raggedness and beggary, I sorted with many whose cunningness reaped

much fruit from the unwary; albeit little profit for "ill-gotten" was aye "ill-spent" with the whole tribe.

My mother (whose soul God assoile) was a woman of rude and rough manners. No tongue, in sooth, could outscold her, nor arm wield a staff with greater execution in a fray.

But, notwithstanding her position (born and herding amongst the lowest tatterdemallions of this great Citie), she had principles that would be an honour to many her superiors.

Two things she earnestly strived to impress upon my mind: neither to lye nor to steal; and herein consisted the whole of my education; the rest I picked up in the streets, as I did my livelihood!

One dismal night, the which trod on the heels of a gainless day (for I had, in truth, gathered nothing but ill words instead of kind alms), I was tramping about after every passer-by, in the hope of still obtaining some aid from charity, for my poor mother lay sick of a fever

and much needed some timely help; when I espied a drunken gallant reeling homewards from a tavern.

In a moment I crossed the street, and had nearly reached my mark, when, behold! my eye caught sight of a heavy bourse, richly broderied! I snatched at the prize. My first thought, I must confess, was to bear it off—the temptation was scarce to be resisted; for I had in my power the ample means of succouring my poor mother.

I trembled. I placed it securely in the breast of my tattered garment, and hastily turned my steps towards the wretched hovel we called our home.

But I tried in vain to quiet the beating of my heart, by thinking that I had not filched it from the drunkard, for I felt a consciousness that the bourse was his; having walked on that spot, to and fro, for the last hour, and none other had passed that way.

It was a painful struggle, but the devil was overcome; and I ran, as fast as my weary legs could carry me, in pursuit of the rightful owner.

He gaped at me wildly, and took the bourse ; but when I humbly sollieted charity, and anon a reward for the money I had restored, the drunkard not only reviled me bitterly, accusing me of stealing it, but dealt me a blow with his walking-staff.

I reeled, and burst into tears, bitter tears of disappointed hope, and the sharper smart arising from the cruel injustice I had suffered at his hands. Young as I then was, howsoever, I felt (albeit my reason was then unripe)—I felt a degree of pleasure at having done my duty.

As I wended homewards, dispirited and hopeless, I passed the very tavern whence this same ungracious galliard had issued, when forth came two more in the like condition, which had probably been his boon companions in the night's carouse ; one of whom dropped his staff in the mire.

I picked it up, and wiping off the soil it had received, presented it, but, remembering me well of the last return I had met with, kept at a wary distance.

“Come hither, knave,” said he, beckoning me and supporting himself against the wall, “thou excellent bundle of rags. Come, hither, I say. Gad’s life! boy, I’ll not eat thee. Thou hast done me service, and no man, woman, or child shall say they ever served Sir Gerald Mountfort, Knight, without vails or value. Look’ee, varlet, there’s a *noble* for thee. Now vanish, and buy thee soap—soap—but don’t drink. Drink makes a beast of a man!”

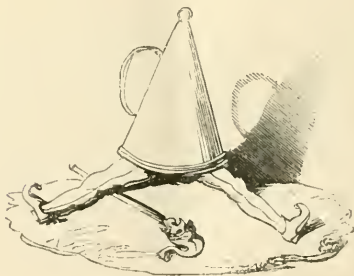
And thus saying, he threw unto me the welcome coin, and reeled off, bawling the ballant of “The Old Man a-wooing’s gone.” So unexpectedly doth both good and evil come upon us mortals.

It is true, alas! that honesty and poverty but too often fall to the share of one man; yet, after all, Honesty, even in rags, will sleep sounder on his straw pallet than Guilt on his down pillow!

My poor sick mother was much moved by the relation of my encounter, and wept plentifully—a sort of small rain that laid the high wind of her

boisterous feelings—for she was too weak to use her tongue, or she would have railed long and lustily agen the ungracious ruffler which had stricken me ; for she misliked, mightily, that other hand than her's should flout or cudgel me ; and, forsooth, she practised the wholesome correction so frequently, that 'tis no marvel she made me the tenderest of sons.

Whether it were, peradventure, the violent emotions of anger and joy, or the aid the money purchased, I know not ; but certes, in this, her struggle with Death, the *noble* proved a *coin* of vantage that gave her the victory for the nonce.





The Cooke's Son.





THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

This book is DUE on the last
date stamped below

10m-11,'50(2555)470

CC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 373 812 7

PR
4705
F68 1

